

Briefly Noted

Pursuing Moral Warfare: Ethics in American, British, and Israeli Counterinsurgency,

Marcus Schulzke (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2019), 256 pp.,

\$110.95 cloth, \$36.95 paper, \$36.95 eBook.

doi:10.1017/S0892679419000303

In his latest book, Marcus Schulzke analyzes the ethical traditions of three national militaries—the U.S. Army, the British Army and Royal Marine Commandos, and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)—to highlight the strengths and limitations of different ethical training systems in promoting moral warfare. A simple yet thought-provoking read, Schulzke’s work is motivated by three considerations. First, while most studies on morality and warfare have focused on civilian and military leadership, Schulzke believes in the need to understand military ethics from the perspective of soldiers and noncommissioned officers on the frontlines, since their choices in war can significantly influence the course of events. Second, he chooses to examine ethical conduct in counterinsurgency operations because of the additional moral complexities they involve, such as the need to make decisions on the escalation of force and how to deal with the risk of civilian casualties. Finally, an empirical approach allows Schulzke to draw meaningful associations between military ethics training at the institutional level and the individual soldier’s experiences with ethical dilemmas on the ground.

Schulzke does not shy away from comparing the three systems, though he makes it clear that he does not argue for one over the others. For example, he notes how the U.S. Army focuses on rule-bound virtue ethics and expects values to be embodied in the character of individual soldiers, given its emphasis on professionalism and voluntary service. The British Army takes a more minimalist, pragmatic approach to military ethics that is influenced by its own counterinsurgency doctrine, even though that doctrine was not designed with ethics in mind. For its part, the IDF subscribes to both deontological and consequentialist thinking. Schulzke argues that by relying on conscription, Israel’s approach to military ethics is necessarily very different from that of the other two countries. Whereas the American and British militaries rely heavily on indirect ethics training through gradual socialization or through the learning of institutional practices, the IDF must provide more direct formal training since many of its soldiers will only serve for a few years. Beyond these comparative findings, Schulzke also provides an interesting glimpse into the dynamics between the

Ethics & International Affairs, 33, no. 3 (2019), pp. 389–390.

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different militaries—such as how British soldiers viewed their American counterparts in Afghanistan and Iraq—which encourages readers to further consider how military coalitions might need to resolve contrasting approaches to ethical conduct in warfare.

Pursuing Moral Warfare is an appealing book meant for a wide diversity of readers,

from academics who are interested in understanding militaries' behaviors in counterinsurgency operation to practitioners who seek to better understand the forces that affect soldiers' behaviors and how to promote more responsible uses of force. Indeed, it should be appealing to anyone seeking to expand his or her understanding of the theory and practice of military ethics.